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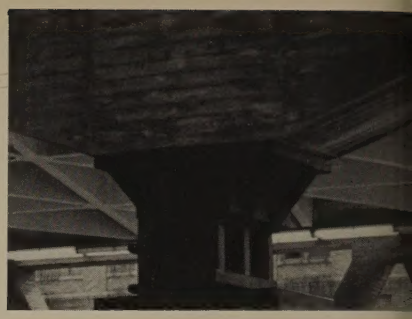

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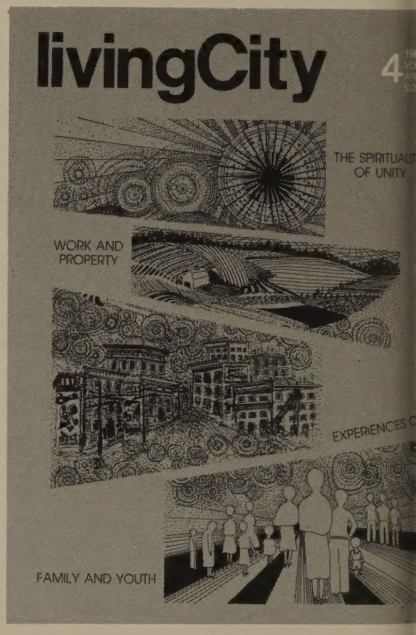

Living City is published 11 times a year (10 monthly and a bimonthly issue in August-September) by the Focolare Movement Women's Branch, Inc. a non-profit corporation, P. O. Box 496, New York, NY 10021.
Subscription prices for one year: USA and possessions: US$12.75; Canada: US$19.00; Elsewhere: US$20.00; Air Mail (all countries): US$30.00.
An envelope is enclosed in each magazine for subscription orders and inquiries: LIVING CITY, P. O. Box 126, Jamaica, NY 11415.
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OTHER EDITIONS OF THE FOCOLARE MOVEMENT MAGAZINE

ITALIAN: "Citta Nuova" - Via degli Scipio 00192 Rome - Italy

FRENCH:
1. "Nouvelle Cite" - 131, rue Castagnary F75 015 France
2. "Nouvelle Cite" - C.P. 636 - St. Jerome - P.Q Canada - J7Z 5T9

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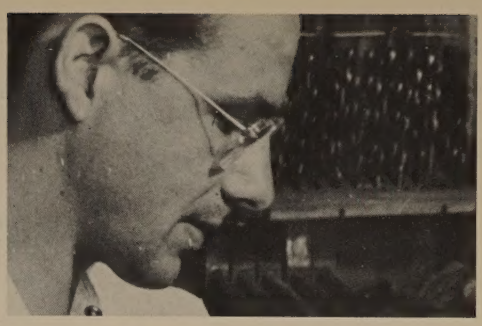

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ISH:
udad Nueva"- Av. da Rivadavia 4939 - Buenos 24 - Argentina
udad Nueva"- Ferrer del Rio, 1 Esc A, 2º 5ª d - Spain
UGHESE: "Cidade Nova" CX POSTAL 30 Vargem Grande Pta. Sao Paolo - Brazil

CHINESE: "San Sing Seung Yuet Hong" - 70 Waterloo Road 11 B/F - Kowloon - Hong Kong

DUTCH: "Nieuwe Stad" - St. Stephanusstrasse 11 Nijmegen - Holland

GERMAN: "Neue Stadt" - Gleissnerstrasse 87 - 8000 Munchen 83 - Germany

OTHER ENGLISH EDITIONS:

1. "New City" - 57 Twyford Avenue - London W3 England
2. "New City" - P.O. Box 332 - Manila, Philippines
3. "New City" - 367 Balwyn Rd - Balwyn North 3104 - Australia

A NEW OCCASION OF GRACE

There are many encouraging events taking place in the ecumenical field. We want to bring to our readers' attention one which involves Roman Catholic-Lutheran dialogue and is of particular significance for the United States.

"Each step that Lutherans and Roman Catholics can take together is to be celebrated with thanksgiving."

From the letter of Bishop James Crumley, Jr. President of the Lutheran Church in America to Pope John Paul II.

An exchange of letters that took place between Pope John Paul II and Bishop James R. Crumley, Jr., President of the Lutheran Church in America offered impressive encouragement to the ecumenical efforts pursued by the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran Church and especially to Lutheran-Catholic dialogue in the United States.

Bishop William Keeler of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, chairman of the U.S. Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, in a statement reflecting the views of the BCEIA, pointed out the important implications involved in such an exchange that further underscores the Pope's "deep personal commitment to the ecumenical cause."

William G. Rusch, Director of Ecumenical Relations of the Lutheran Church in America, in his preface to the publication of the two letters stated, "This correspondence is of considerable ecumenical significance. It marks a new step in the process of close relationships between the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran Church in America. A careful examination of history may well disclose that this correspondence is unprecedented."

The letter written by Bishop Crumley and dated May 22 of last year recalls the personal contacts he had with the Pope in recent years, including several visits and private conversations. It notes the encouraging work underway with the Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity, the "theological convergence" that is developing, and the determined efforts to involve parish members in a dialogue with neighboring Roman Catholic parishioners. The documents produced by the Roman Catholic-Lutheran theological dialogues are distributed to all Lutheran pastors in the United States with the encouragement to study and use the material.

Many very productive dialogues are underway throughout the United States yet the realization is still there that unity as intended by God is not yet a reality.

"Progress has been made," wrote Bishop Crumley, "but the relationship which grows so rapidly remains fragile." Perhaps this exchange of letters could help to alert and encourage all to the need to persevere "in the difficult task of expressing our unity," accentuating the many already-existing points of unity.

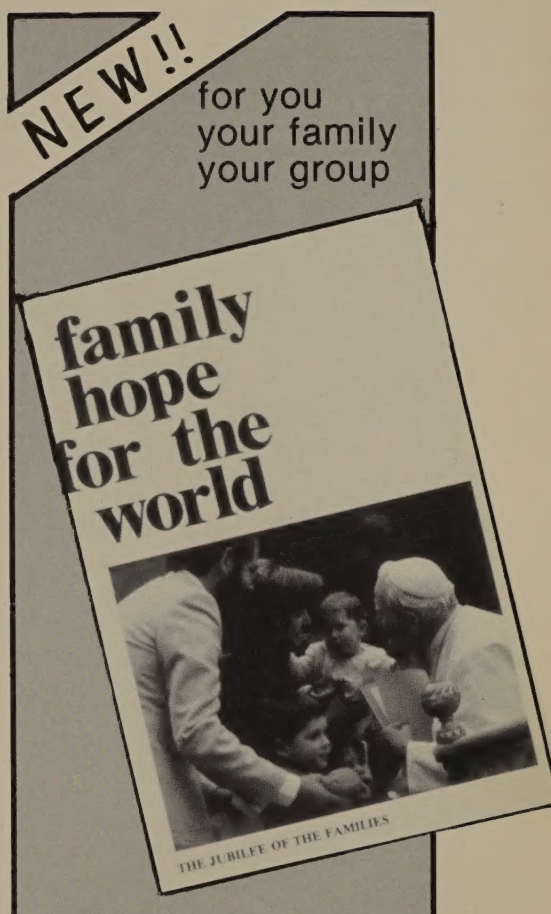
The Pope's letter of reply is swift to give assurance of his "primary concern" for the furthering of the ecumenical movement, particularly since he is called to the See of Peter, "which by its very nature exists to serve the unity of Christ's Church."

The Pope wrote in praise of the Lutheran Churches engaged in dialogues encouraging the continuation of these efforts. " ... I am happy to hear you speak," the Pope wrote, "about the ... collaboration in prayer and good works taking place in the United States between Lutherans and Catholics on various levels.... For the ecumenical collaboration by the Catholic faithful under the guidance of their Bishops and in close union with the Bishop of Rome is a task engendered by the Second Vatican Council and a continuing responsibility in the Catholic Church."

Both letters contain a warmth and clarity of purpose that is striking. The awareness of present problems is not overlooked, but the thrust towards unity is clearly reinforced lending significant encouragement to all those praying for the visible unity of the Church.

"As all of us," the Pope concluded in his letter, "Christians of many communities and countries, approach the twenty-first century, perhaps we can see this time as a new occasion of grace. Another stage of history unfolding before us offers opportunities to leave behind the vestiges of hostility and misunderstanding that are the heritage of the millennium now coming to a close. There may not be easy solutions to the problems to be faced in order to achieve unity, but 'hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us' (Rom. 5:5).

"Can we not aim therefore at making the dawn of the third millennium the beginning of a special time for seeking full unity in Christ?"



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THE PILLAR which supports our life

Here we are—now and for the rest of our lives, we hope—on the Holy Journey, our pilgrimage towards God which we have all set out on together. And certainly we are not doing this because we have a mania to be perfect, or to nourish our spiritual pride. Neither are we doing it to be better than others; but we are doing it to be holy for the glory of God, because God wants it. In fact, St. Paul says, "It is God's will that you grow in holiness" (1 Thess 4:3). So then, during these next two weeks: *Forward! Forward, without stopping!*

And if in the past we have stopped, as can happen and does happen, then we have one more reason for setting out anew with added vigor on the Holy Journey.

"Be holy," Mother Teresa one day wrote to me, "because Jesus is holy." And that's the way it is: we must become holy, which means become saints, because Jesus is holy. And we become saints by living God's word. We know that whoever is living according to his word, is already holy, at least in that moment. Jesus said, "Those who listen to my word" (that is, those who receive his word in their heart and put it into practice) "are already made clean" (cf Jn. 15:3). If this is true, then it is clear that we will become saints by trying our best to be God's word, God's living word in every moment—including right now.

Today we want to understand better how to live according to God's word. We should regard living according to his word as the most important thing we have to do in our lives. How many times our heart is drawn, instead, toward the many things there are in the world around us, or toward those things which are within us. And how often, for example, we give first place to our job, to our studies, to our activities, or perhaps even to a hobby or to amusements. Oftentimes we are dominated by vanity or chained by affections, and sometimes we are even slaves of things which are not at all pleasing to God. So, practically speaking, most of the time we direct our mind's attention, our heart's affection, and the thrust of our will towards the things of this earth.

What place does God's word occupy in our lives? Well, we remember it every so often, and that's it. But this is not the kind of life that Jesus expects of us. God's word must be our first love, before everything else. It must be the pillar which supports our entire life, the root from which the rest of our life blossoms. It is his word which must enlighten our every activity, moment by moment. It must straighten out and correct every aspect of our life.

Look at Mary: her life was all in conformity with the words of God, which she kept in her heart and meditated on so as to translate them into life. We might say that Mary is totally *Word of God*, and since she lived holiness perfectly, her life was really a Holy Journey.

But let us look above all at Jesus. He lived just as we do. He was a carpenter, he worked hard, he was active in doing apostolic work. He rested, he ate, he loved Mary and Joseph. He instructed his disciples, he worked miracles, he fed the masses. But who was Jesus? Wasn't he the Word, the Word of God made flesh?

Since Jesus, the Word of God, took upon Himself our human nature, we will be true Christians and become saints if we allow the whole of our lives to be permeated with God's word.

CHIARA LUBICH

From the book **Journey** *by Chiara Lubich, published by New City Press.*

FAMILY LIFE

Weakened family life is one of the greatest social ills of our time.
The "New Family" Movement has as its aim to bring the Focolare spirit of unity into family life, so that each family will be deeply united within itself and with other families.

THE CHALLENGE OF A SPECIAL MOMENT

With this issue of Living City we are starting a series of articles on one particular situation of family life, that is, dealing with young adults at the moment when they exert their independence in the struggle to find themselves and their place in the world. They sort out and test the values passed on to them and it is not unusual for them to find it difficult to communicate across the abyss of an entire generation.
Living City asked members of the New Family Movement to share how they have faced the challenge of this moment and coped with its oftentimes difficult situations.

(N.B. Names and places have been changed by the Editor)

Compiled by PHYLLIS SCARINGE

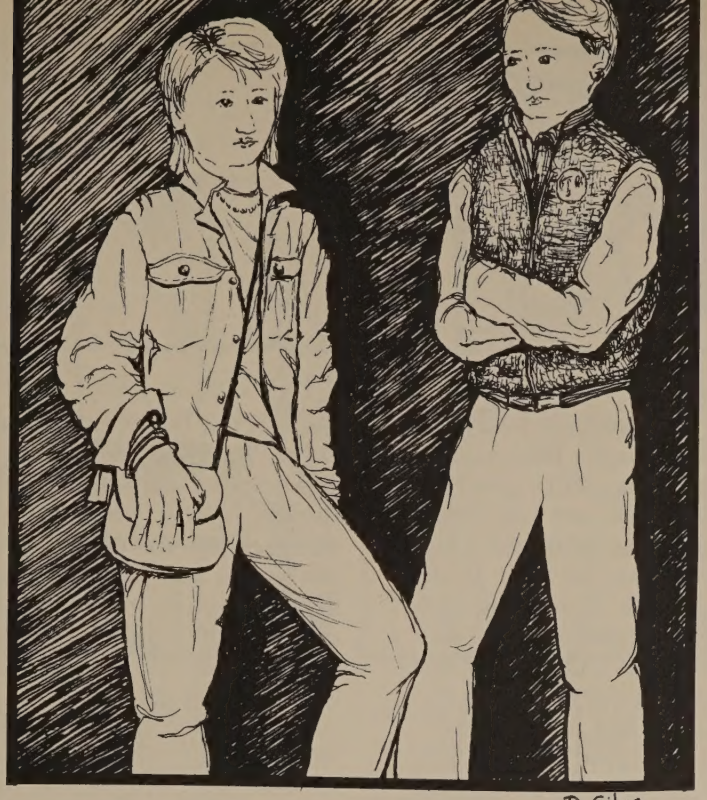
Karen and Mike from California have three sons who are in, or have passed through adolescence and are on their way into the adult world.

"When our children were smaller," Karen began, "I always had a terrible fear of the moment when they would reach their teens. I listened to the experiences of other parents who had children in that age group and I wondered how I would ever cope if the frightening situations they described ever happened in our family.

"It was just when our first son was approaching this age when I came in contact with the Focolare Movement. We attended one of their summer gatherings, the Mariapolis, and there many people of different ages, and often whole families together, shared how they had tried to put the Movement's Gospel-based spirituality of unity into practice in regular family life. There I gained a lot of hope and encouragement that there is another way that we can choose, that there is another way to handle situations, even the most difficult ones. It was up to me to try.

"That was several years ago now, but I have seen that it is true. Our sons are very different from one another and no two situations have been alike. You have new and different experiences each time.

"I remember one experience a few years ago with one of our sons when he was nineteen. He was in his second year of college and was two months into his second semester when he just came home one day and told us he had quit school. It was quite a blow and thoughts started racing through my mind. How could he do this without discussing it with us first? My first reaction was one of anger and I wanted to tell him just what I was thinking.



"Another thought quickly surfaced, however, and I knew that I had to put aside my own feelings in order to love him, to really try and understand why he had this idea. I had the best of intentions as his mother to make sure that he did what I thought was right but I realized that my love for him had to be a little more like God's love for him.

"I sat down with him and asked how he had come to that decision and I tried to listen without thinking of whether or not I agreed. He told me that, as a matter of fact, he had already gotten a job because school just wasn't for him. It was a struggle for me to continue to listen without reacting but I was sure that what counted here, as in everything, was to love. He had made up his mind.

"That wasn't the end of it yet, however. A few weeks later he came home one night with his girlfriend and announced that they were going to get married. It was one blow after the other and my patience was really being tried. Once again, I pushed aside my own thoughts to try and love them both and listen to their ideas. At the same time I felt that I couldn't simply agree to this situation.

"Mike and I sat down with them to share all that we feel about married life, to help them to realize that it is a commitment for the rest of their lives and that it is a serious decision. I really felt that it was my responsibility to also make them aware of the practical side of things and that a loving sentiment is not enough. Out of love for them we shared experiences of our own married life, of our realization at one point that our love for one another had to be one that was willing to grow and sacrifice and mature and follow through with the yes we had once said, not giving up at the first difficulty.

"Nothing more was said about this for a few weeks, then one evening they both came back to the house and the girl thanked us for everything we had said. She said she really understood that what we had told them was said out of love for them, not because we were trying to stand between them or hurt them but really to help them to see the truth of what they were saying yes to.

"I felt such a joy in hearing this because for me it had been a struggle to keep loving without ulterior motives, without expecting them to change their minds. They said they thought they should wait a few years, that our son should look for a better job and so on. I was happy to see that the relationship built with this girl had been strengthened by this experience."

Mike: "It was a very difficult moment for me, too, when our son told us he had decided to quit school. I was very hurt and, even though in that moment I tried to be patient and listen, I realized in the days that followed that I hadn't fully accepted it. I really thought it was the wrong decision and it seemed the beautiful relationship we had began to dissolve. I found myself getting easily upset with him because the situation was bothering me so much.

"Then one day I realized that my attitude was all wrong, that my love for him had to be different, that I couldn't cling to what I thought was right for him, but let him free, trusting in the love of God for my son. For the first time I felt free, that my love for my son had been purified you could say. Pushing him would have only made things so much worse.

"Not too long after he came and told us that he wants to go back to school in September. The taste he had of the working world was enough for him. "It's not easy to maintain unity ►

always. I often find I have to overcome myself, but once I take that step, unity grows.

For example, not too long ago one of our sons got a ticket in a city about an hour from where we live. One thing that I hate to do is drive. I feel like I'm always in the car. So when he came and asked me to go with him to see about the ticket I was ready to say no. He had gotten the ticket and now he could straighten it out himself. I thought about it for a moment, however, and realized that I could take advantage of this moment to love and build a greater unity. So I said yes, I would go.

"That day turned out to be one of the most beautiful I ever spent with my son. We shared many things with each other and I was grateful to God for that opportunity which I could have easily thrown away."

Karen: "Going back to the situation with our son's girlfriend, I should say that it hasn't been all smooth sailing since then. At one point the girl had second thoughts about everything and began to resent us to the point that she and our son broke up. I heard through a friend that she had said certain things about me that besides being very hurtful were untrue.

"Naturally my first reaction was one of anger. I wanted to defend myself to anyone who would listen. It was very hard for me to overcome this. I had to forcefully remind myself that my first duty as a Christian is to love. It hurt me too because it had seemed to me that we had such a beautiful relationship. We could really talk to one another and share many things. Now it was such a strain when she came over to the house and I had to remind myself that to love with the measure of Jesus' love meant to put aside all my feelings and take the initiative.

"Once when she was over with my son I felt that it would be love for her to invite her to stay for dinner. It was hard for me to overcome myself and do this to really make her feel welcome in my home but I took the step and asked. Her abrupt 'no' was like another test for my love, like seeing if I was really ready to go beyond my feelings.

"They left to go out and came back later. My son was working out the back and I could see that she was cold out there. With everything that had happened, though, why should I stick my neck out and ask her if she would like to come in and warm up. Again I had to ask myself what my life was really all about. Was I really ready to give my life for my neighbor? Didn't I tell Jesus in the Eucharist each morning that I wanted to give him my whole life and now I was letting my pride stop me from loving.

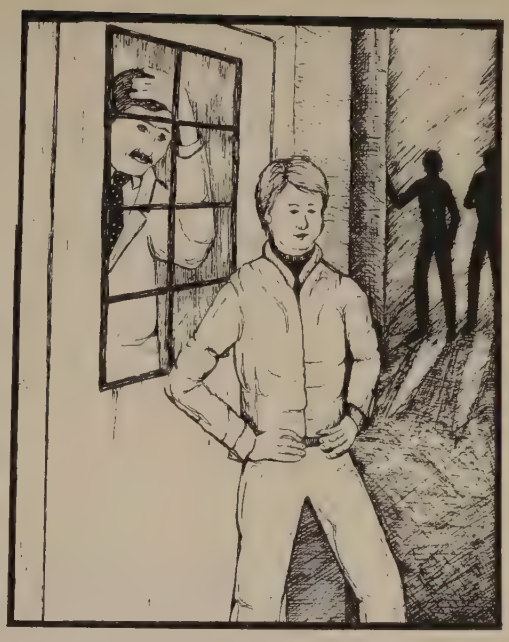
"I decided to go out to her, and immediately I felt great peace. She accepted my invitation and followed me into the house. We sat together and talked, and even though I could tell that our relationship was not yet completely restored to what it once was, at least some steps had been taken. In fact, as she was leaving she turned to me and said that she would really like to spend more time with me. My son later came up to me and gave me a hug saying, 'Mom, you really live what you believe.'

Mike: "The thing that I have to overcome all the time in raising teenagers is the 'power struggle'. For example, they want to do something you can't let them do and you tell them; they resist and rebel and I become upset and want to insist with my authority as a parent to make them conform. Now I realize that it's more important to put love where I don't find it and maintain unity at any cost. That's not easy for me because I'm rebellious myself.

"In one particular moment I was having a very strong personality clash with one of our sons. I realized that I was using my authority as a parent to try and get him to do something and he totally resisted. When I realized what I was doing I tried to change my attitude and love. He remained all the more obstinate and the more I tried to love the more rebellious and indifferent he became.

"That month we were living the word of life 'Blessed are the peacemakers' (Mt. 5:9) and I felt I was really being put to the test to live it.

One morning I decided I really wanted to be the first to love in this situation and I went out to the kitchen to prepare a special breakfast for him. He took one look at it and refused to eat it saying, 'Who asked you to prepare this anyway?' It was a



great lesson for me in loving without expecting anything in return. Only remembering the suffering of Jesus on the cross helped helped me to overcome these moments and start over again.

"One evening I was sitting at the table working on the bills and he came in. He sat next to me and started lashing out at me, reminding me of things he had suffered because of me in his past life. I had to ask myself in that moment how much I really loved him. If I was ready to give my life for him it meant sitting and listening without reacting as I certainly felt like doing. Suddenly I realized that I wasn't hearing the hurtful things he was saying, but rather I was becoming more and more aware of the suffering he had inside. Embracing the suffering had helped me to go beyond the pain and listen without wanting to defend myself any more. I silently thanked God that my son was expressing all his pain and I saw it as something very fruitful. Finally he burst into tears and apologized for everything he had said and asked me why I didn't say something back to him. For me it was like a momentof understanding that he was suffering not because of the pain of something in the past but because he couldn't forgive and that my part in this was to continue to love. It seemed to me to be the foundation of a real deepening of our relationship and I thanked God for the grace to be patient and love instead of reacting in those moments. It's not that the situation was completely resolved but at least he was able to start again, to trust again in our relationship and to try to build on it again."

Karen: "Trying to love like this is a constant 'pruning' for me, but the end result is really a greater unity, a stronger bond. Once we were visiting our oldest son's apartment. He had been there for a few months but there were still boxes of things all over. My natural tendency was to want to fix everything up for him the way I thought it would look good. But I realized that this would be like saying I can do it better than you, and where would the love be. It was hard for me to just sit there and lose my own ideas but I knew inside that this was the way to go.

"Later we all went out shopping together. I wanted to buy a comforter for his bed and I did. As soon as we got back I started to open the package so that we could see how it looked. He asked me what I was doing and I told him. 'I can open it tonight when I need it,' was his reply. It was a small thing, you could say, but it took a lot for me to just leave it where it was in the bag.

"As we were talking he told us that he had received a letter from his supervisor at work saying how happy they are with him. I saw the letter and wanted to pick it up and read it all when I thought that if he had wanted me to read it he would have given it to me. To love him meant instead to have a new measure of respect even if I was the mother. Many little things like this happened and it was hard for me to just let him be free to be himself and to accept what he wanted to give of himself. At the end of the day he asked me if I would like to read the letter, but now even reading it had another value for me. He gave me a big hug as we were leaving, something he doesn't usually do. That for me was really like a little piece of the 'hundredfold' that God promises when we try to put him first.

"Sometimes I think that as a parent I run the risk of getting caught up in who I think my children should be and I miss the gift that they truly are as individuals. I miss the gifts and talents that God has given them. Instead, if my attitude is one of love, then I see things I would otherwise miss.

"Our youngest son is just thirteen and, as with all our children, it's hard to know when to be flexible and when to be firm. Sometimes, in fact, it

(Continued on page 26)

IN THE WAKE OF A WHIRLWIND

By SILVANO COLA

In 1948 Igino Giordani, politician and writer, met the Focolare Movement for the first time. It was a meeting which he described as a "whirlwind" in the wake of which he felt drawn to follow Chiara Lubich and her first companions. Later he became the first married focolarino, dedicating himself completely to God, while fulfilling his vocation as husband and father.
This month marks the sixth anniversary of his passing and we would like to remember Foco (as he was known in the Movement) with this imaginary interview by Silvano Cola who knew him for many years.

There he is," said my guide, pointing across the gardens to where an old man sat on a lovely park bench quietly enjoying the warmth of the sun. I instinctively felt drawn to this serene and obviously contented man who seemed to have come from another era. He sat there with his Panama hat and cane and a radiant smile. He had a humorous, almost mischievious glint in his eyes which gave him a youthful look making it hard to believe he had passed his 85th springtime.

I knew that he was a prolific writer and that many of his works were considered classics—but I must confess I first got to know him through one of his humoristic works on the topic of his own childhood family. It was a masterpiece of humor and style.

But Igino Giordani roused my curiosity for other reasons. First of all because at a time when the study of the early Fathers of the Church was relatively unknown, Giordani wrote about them as if they were people he knew. He quoted them when it was least expected and on a variety of topics. He had even adopted the literary style of one of them with whom he felt a particular kinship; the combative Tertullian.

Secondly, I was curious about him because he was not only a layperson but a married man as well: two conditions which made him feel as if he were among the "proletariat of the Spirit." This did not stop him though, on the contrary it stimulated him to fight—supported by the Church Fathers—for the right of every Christian, every layperson both married and single to aspire to sanctity, to a life of holiness.

At that time (1948) many contemporary historians considered sanctity for the laity as a lost cause and Giordani himself was caught up in trying to convince them to the contrary when something happened to change him. The fiery Tertullian became the peaceful Augustine (post conversion); and the champion of Christian causes began to resemble more St. John the Evangelist silently contemplating Mary, both mother and virgin.

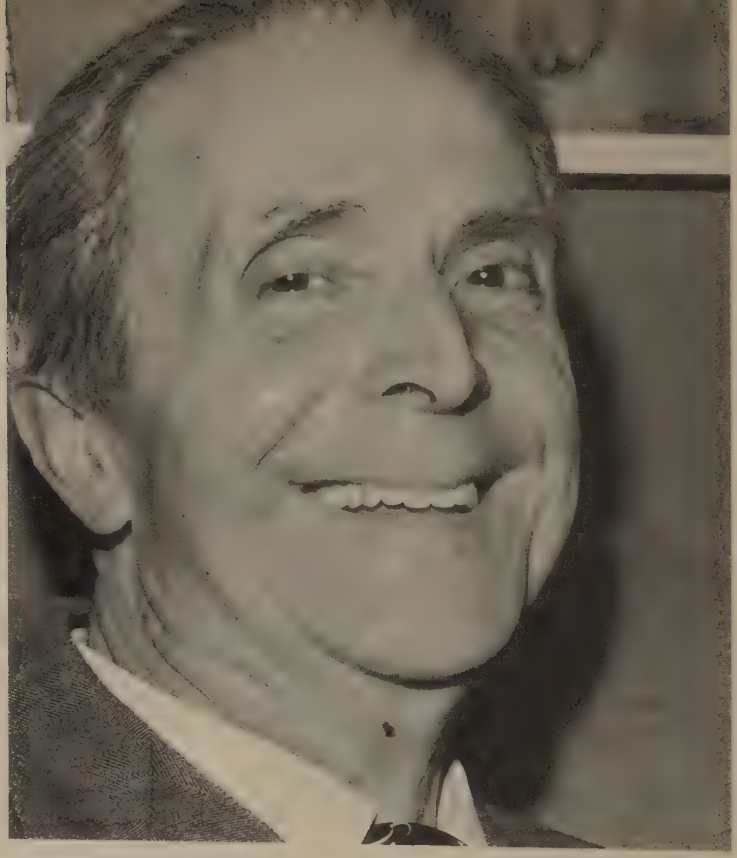
And so we sat together on that bench in a beautiful English style garden in the hills overlooking Rome. The July sun bore down on us and I sweated profusely. I tried to lean back into the shade of a tree and continue to observe him from the corner of my eye. He was enjoying every bit of the sun and kept the blanket over his knees.

"Could you please tell me," I began, "what exactly happened to you in 1948?"

"Try to imagine," he replied the disillusionment of a person who for years had fought in the political and civil arena against the "status quo" of a world resigned to conflict and division and who had been convinced that in the Gospel lay the solution to all the problems upsetting society and did his utmost to apply its teachings. This person came to believe that the early Church Fathers, in their writings, had given proposals for solutions that society is seeking today and recognized all too clearly that after nearly 2,000 years the real social revolution of the Gospel is still an unfulfilled dream. It made me think that my ideas were mere hallucinations!

"Now try to appreciate the shock I had when, in 1948—from the simple words of a girl from Trent I understood in a flash that she and her companions had begun that revolution ... not with words, but with their lives: and that in a small group of people composed of laymen and women, of religious and of priests, I could see humanity in miniature just as I had dreamed of it. It was not so much the fact of who these people were—even though I had the distinct impression of contemplating heaven on earth—as much as the certainty that they possessed the secret of expanding this life throughout the world. ... "

"Excuse me"! I interrupted , "I know you enjoy using



Igino Giordani: "Immediately I seemed to understand the whole Gospel in a totally new way...."

paradoxes in your books but just between the two of us now, could you speak as simply as possibly?"

"Sure! he answered." After all, the only real paradox through history was Jesus himself, a man-God. All that he said can seem paradoxical. But his is not a literary paradox but divine truth, truth to be lived, the truth about mankind, for mankind! Thank God many people have taken his message literally and as a result the Church has had a string of saints in every epoch.

"However, I am not speaking of the personal holiness of individuals ; nor of the marvelous works achieved by the saints. No! The understanding I want to make clear to you is this; Jesus did not come just to redeem a few individuals and lead them into heaven: He came to build a society on earth with all the characteristics of the society of heaven. He came to change the relationship that exists between people into the likeness of the relationship that exists between the three Persons of the Trinity!

"What a dazzling vision of things I had the day when that girl from Trent, Chiara Lubich, told us that Jesus came from heaven to earth like an emigrant, to bring us the life, the way of living that is shared there, because he wished that everyone, and everything, would give themselves to be transformed into a new order according to the law of heaven ... the law of love!

"Immediately I seemed to understand the whole Gospel in a totally new way; and I discovered in that 'new way' a revolutionary power that it brought to bear on every area of life in society."

A small cloud passed in front of the sun for a moment, and Giordani pulled his blanket closer. I took advantage of this momentary silence to say to him: "Can you give me some examples of what you mean? I feel somewhat at a loss."

He thought for a moment and then smiled and said: "Well! Take me for example. When had I ever, as a member of Parliament, seen Jesus in any other senator (or deputy as we call them), even though I had written in my books: 'He who sees his brother, sees the Lord'? What I am trying to say is, if in every neighbor I see the Lord then I must love him, and to love him I must serve him, and to serve him I have to look after him as I do for myself. The whole Gospel revolution is in that one word, 'as.' Or consider what Jesus said of the family. Didn't Jesus say to be perfect 'as' the Father and that husband and wife must love each other 'as' themselves? As for me, a married ,man, I confess I had never really done this, even though I thought I was a good Christian; whereas today, only a few years later, I receive letters from all over the world from married couples who are living so totally immersed in God, like monks and nuns, that they are truly approaching a real mystical experience.

"I'm sure you know how in the past a big distinction was made between the laity (and particularly married people) and people consecrated to God.

That is why it was all the more impressive that Chiara and her companions who had chosen virginity, loved me 'as' they loved themselves and brought me along in the wake of the whirlwind of their spiritual experience.

"It was a miracle. There I was, the Vatican librarian who had set myself up as a Church historian: my whole life became turned inside out. Not only me as an individual but it was a miracle that was destined to involve in the same life a group of men and women, married and unmarried, yet all equally consecrated to God, each according to his or her state in life.

"Historically, religious orders did not always have the most harmonious of relationships with one another so it was a shock for me the day I met Chiara for the first time in the House of Parliament. She was accompanied by three Franciscans: a Capuchin, a Friar Minor, and a Conventual. Perhaps you are familiar with the controversy that historically had taken place among these three branches of Franciscanism but here they were all one. I can't tell you whether they resembled more a re-born St. Francis or Jesus himself!

"It was at that moment that I understood that the priesthood, marriage and celibacy are three sides of a triangle with an interchanging mixture of the human and the divine. If love flows from one to the other they are three and they are one; they are God's channel by which he continues the incarnation of his Son. At the center of the triangle is Mary, virgin and wife: mother of Christ the eternal priest."

"This is terrific," I said. "Now I can see how the Church Fathers understood that we are to relive the Trinity on earth. It seems to me, however, that with the exception of the very earliest times of Christianity, relationships patterned on the Trinity, this life of heaven, was lived mostly in hermitages and monasteries by people who had withdrawn from the world rather than by people who lived in the midst of the world. But now, from what I understand you to be saying, the innovation that you came in contact with was that all mankind, no matter what one's social position or state of life might be, this Trinitarian way of living arrived at through reciprocal love, is not only possible but it is the only way of life that is worth living—because it is the life for which mankind was created! Mankind was created to be the image, and live in the likeness of the three Persons of the Trinity. Jesus made it possible for us even though we are sinners! Whoever loves is *really* in God and God is in him, as Saint John tells us. It sounds like a dream! Break down all barriers, sweep away all discrimination, cancel out all divisions made by age differences, and I could go on and on. It is really mind-boggling! Once we have understood what God has done for us, a man can no longer be a 'chauvinist,' a woman a 'feminist,' a priest a 'cleric,' nor the layperson 'lay.' A boss can no longer impose his authority nor the laborer consider himself an 'underling.'

"I must confess, however, that for me it is a bit difficult to understand just how I can go on being 'me' when I have to 'make myself one' with someone else out of love? You know, there are so many psychological theories that are circulating nowadays.... It's beyond me."

Giordani looked at me with a fatherly, almost ecstatic smile: "Just try," he said. "Try and you will understand. Chiara used to tell us: 'What good is a candle that doesn't give off light as it burns? A candle is itself precisely when it is burning itself up to give light. Similarly, we are truly ourselves, if we love, that is, if we don't think about ourselves but about God, about his will which is above all to love our neighbor. Therefore if we want to *be*, to be truly ourselves, to be fulfilled as Christians, we must *not be*, we must cease to be, in order to 'live' our neighbor.' Then she went on to explain this further by saying: 'I was created by God to be a gift to

(Continued on page 28)

HOW TO DEVELOP

OUR POTENTIAL

Question: At this stage in our lives we feel the need to develop our talents and reach our fullest potential. Is it right to feel this way? It seems that everyone around us thinks that in order to achieve this goal we have to affirm ourselves, even if it means stepping on others to do it. This is not a good thing, but if we always love others as the Gospel demands of us, then don't we run the risk of failing to develop our own personality?

A group of young people from Rome

Answer: Since you mention talents in your question, it makes me think of that famous parable in the Gospel. At that time, of course, the "talent" was a monetary unit, but it is because of that parable that we give that word the meaning it has today.

I am sure you remember the story: the wealthy landowner entrusted each of his three servants, according to their individual capacity, with either five or three or one talent. The first two servants immediately got to work, doing whatever they could so that when the master returned they were able to give him back twice as much as they had received. The third servant, however, out of fear of losing his talent, hid it away without putting it to good use. The conclusion of the parable: the third servant had done the wrong thing and the only talent that he had was taken from him and given to one of the others.

The answer seems to be very clear. I think by using it Jesus is inviting us not to bury any talent that we might have, but to put it to good use and develop all our potential. I think also that it is a particularly meaningful passage for young people. Neither the passiveness of the fearful nor the laziness of the conformist is of any use. What is needed today is the generosity of the courageous.

That parable is beautiful also because it states that the talents were freely given and that we cannot take them lightly. In one way or another, one day we will have to give an account of how we used them.

But how can we develop our talents? I think that what is important is to learn how to develop them not in a selfish way, but in a way that is useful to others. If, for example, I like to play a musical instrument, I should know how to play not only for myself, closed off in my room, but being ready to share this gift with others. This is true then not only when it comes to my guitar, but also with my studies, with my work, with everything. I can work at perfecting all these activities so that I can be always more useful to others.

This brings us to the second part of your question. You're right. It seems today that only

UR OWN PERSONALITY

hose who affirm themselves at he cost of stepping on others levelop their personalities. But f this is true, it is because in eality what comes to our mind s only a certain type of per-onality, one that in fact is not eally developed at all. By this mean a type of personality hat is rather limited, deformed would say, because only one spect of it is developed.

An example of this would be he type that steps on others out of fear of being stepped on. But in this way we end up af-firming ourselves against the others, closing ourselves off, becoming suspicious, defensive and incapable of perceiving the new dimensions of life that are continually blossoming around us. This is the personality of those who live in the midst of the crowds but who remain desperately alone and often filled with anguish. This hap-pens because, while affirming themselves, they have cut themselves off from the others and from God. They even lose their own sense of self worth.

The fact remains that we are not isolated individuals; we are members of a body wherein each member grows inasmuch as he or she is able to freely give and receive. The Gospel is not the only place where we find this concept. Many people think this way. Certain experiences of our day and age, like wars for example, have taught us that what counts in life is "being," not "having," and that the only valid solution to the problems plaguing humanity is love.

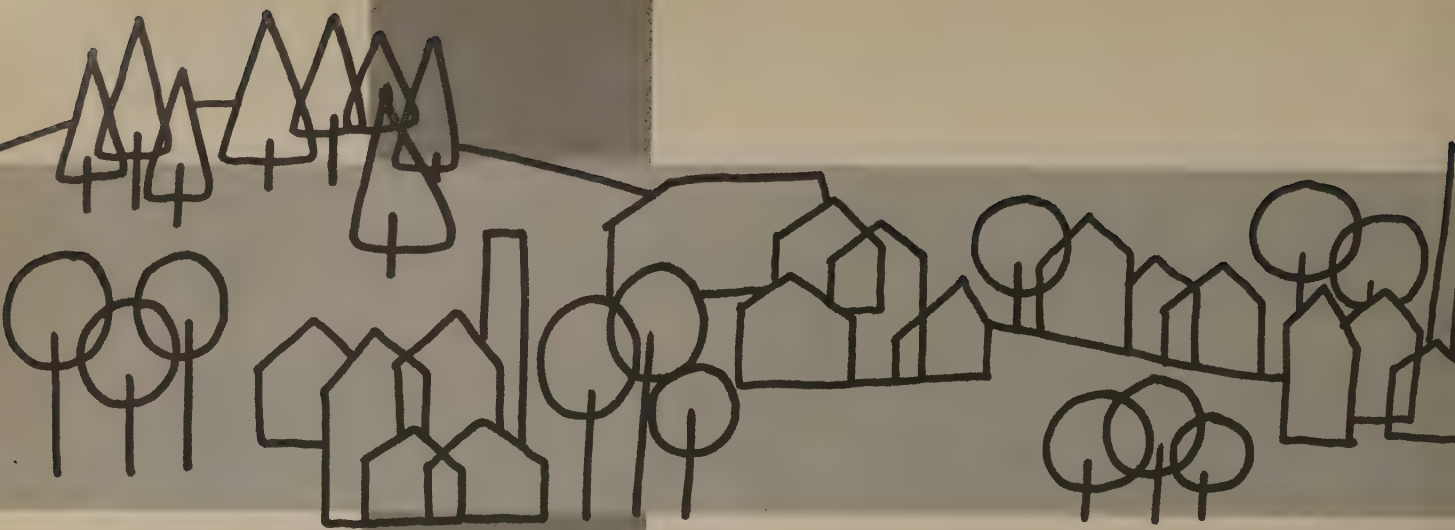
Those who are capable of opening themselves up to others (and this means being able to listen to others and offer one's own ideas, tastes and customs) develop within themselves a more harmonious personality because they allow themselves to be continually enriched by all that is good in others.

All of this calls for a great capacity for loving others, not with the sentimental love that we often see displayed around us, nor with the passiveness of those who blend into the group for comfort's sake. No, this love embodies conviction, creativity, training, humility and courage, the courage to begin again after every failure, love that requires all our mind, all our heart, all our will, all our strength.

This is the love that the Gospel speaks of. And if the Gospel teaches us that we must be ready to put aside everything out of love for our neighbor, it is so that nothing becomes our "idol," so that nothing impedes the growth of a harmonious relationship with God and with our neighbor. Nothing. Not even our own talents.

Don't be afraid. The one who lets go of something out of love for the others, even his own personality, suffers only an apparent loss. In actual fact, this is the way to truly develop it because what is truly being developed is one's capacity to love and this is the greatest talent that any one of us could possibly possess.

Carlos Claria



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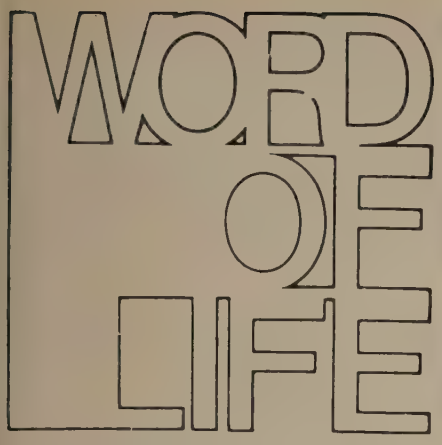

"The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me."
(John 10:27)

The word makes us live.

The word makes us free.

The word guarantees happiness.

The word converts.

The word purifies us.

The word draws us to our specific vocations.

The word brings forth the hatred of the world and the sanctity of the disciple.

The word makes us see the truth.

The word brings comfort.

The word gives us joy.

The word produces works.

The word gives wisdom.

The word preserves us from human concerns.

The word obtains everything.

The word brings about union with God.

The word gives us hope of eternal life.

The word makes us one.

The word changes one's mentality.

The word makes each soul a heaven.

These words are a part of an important debate which took place in the portico of the Temple of Jerusalem. Jesus was asked to plainly say whether or not he was the Messiah. He answered that the works he does (and here he is referring to the miracle of the man born blind whom he had healed a short while before), plainly show who he is. " But you refuse to believe," Jesus admonished his questioners (meaning: you are not among my disciples). His disciples were those who believe in him, "because my sheep (my disciples) listen to my voice."

"The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me."

Earlier on, Jesus had said that in order to be his follower, and loyal to his word, it is necessary to be called by the Father, to be drawn by him through the gift of his grace (John 6:44 and 65). Naturally, he would like to give this gift to everyone. One condition, however, is necessary: to be open, to be in the attitude of welcoming the truth. We are talking about a gift which we can either accept or reject. Furthermore, this yes or no that we will say to Jesus will have consequences.

As the evangelist continued the discourse of faith, he wanted to point out the ramifications our yes or no to Jesus can have. A persistent no leads to an ever growing darkness, a lack of understanding of the meaning of his words, his loving gestures, his work. Darkness may even turn into rejection and hostility.

"The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me."

The parable of the Good Shepherd (John 10:1-16)—to which our word of life refers—describes those persons who remain open to Jesus. The sheep spoken of here do not represent those who simply believe in Jesus but rather those in whom faith and openness to Jesus has reached full development; it is those whom Jesus has drawn into communion, into an intimacy with him, made up of awareness and mutual giving.

These people "listen to Jesus' voice," meaning they have acquired an instinct, a sensitivity to him. They are always more in tune with his thoughts, with his feelings, with his teachings. They possess a capacity for discernment which is how they can tell whether or not a particular idea coincides with Jesus' teachings and therefore can either be accepted or rejected.

Jesus "knows these people" the way he "knows his sheep," meaning he knows who belongs to him and loves them with a very special love. He gives them the peace and joy which only he can give and no one can take away.

That is why these people "follow Jesus," like sheep "follow their shepherd." The implication is that they put his teachings into practice as if it were the most normal thing to do; it has become second nature to them. Even the most difficult tasks become easy.

"The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me."

Jesus did not say these words for a restricted and privileged circle of people but for everyone who wants to be his disciple.

This tells us that we should not be content to remain at just any stage of Christian life. We are called to true friendship and personal intimacy with Jesus, which is a fruit of his grace at work. Jesus wants our relationship with him to grow to the point of nevermore separating from him, no matter what may happen. He would like us to be certain and unwavering before intimidating situations, when faced with ever-changing social doctrines, or before a barrage of temptations, remaining firm and unshakeable because we have learned by experience that Jesus is the Truth, he is joy, he is Life. Then we will really be Christians capable of bearing witness to him before the world, and worthy of his greater trust.

But how do we reach this point? By developing in us the openness to Jesus which we spoke of earlier: by means of prayer and study, by listening to and committing ourselves to living his word, above all by living the commandment to love our neighbor, by loving the cross, and so forth. Then a particular condition—which those among us who are Catholic cannot forget—is to always keep ourselves united with our bishop and with the Pope, with those whom Jesus, the true Shepherd, left as his representatives in guiding the Church.

Chiara Lubich

EXPERIENCES

At the office

One morning I arrived late to work because of a subway delay. The moment I walked in, my boss gave me a pile of things to do. I had had an upsetting experience on the subway, and now I didn't even have a moment to catch my breath.

While I was trying to unlock the file cabinets in my boss's office the phone began to ring. He immediately voiced a complaint to me about not answering the call on time in the middle of his own phone conversation. I explained that the girl at the call directory would get it. As I was leaving his office, I felt my anger welling up inside and I slammed one of the cabinet doors on the way out.

At the sound of the slam I knew this was no way for me to act. My feelings were all jumbled inside and I was still angry. I knew I had to do something. First of all, I mustered my strength and said my yes to God. Then with an act of the will, I made a decision to love, no matter what I was feeling inside. So I put a smile on my face and truly began to serve my boss from my heart out of love for Jesus.
Within a short time, we were both talking and laughing, and in my soul I felt unity and harmony restored.

M.B.

The other day in the office, a report was being prepared by an officer within my boss's staff and I was asked to type a memo which would be going to a number of people with the report. After the memo was typed and signed, I was given about six or seven copies of the report which were to be distributed to each individual on the memo.

As I was about to mail out the reports, I realized that I should make a copy for my files and upon taking a closer look I noticed that some of the pages were cut off at the bottom. I had new copies made of those pages and then had to take all the reports apart and insert the good pages.

Now this was not my job, and I felt I should have explained all this to my boss since it became so time-consuming. But then I remembered the words of Scripture, "Love one another as I have loved you." I realized if I told my boss what had happened, it would have looked bad for the secretary who had prepared the work.

In order to put the words of the Gospel into practice, I decided to keep silent. Although I didn't receive recognition for the fact that I had saved by boss from embarrassment by catching this error, I realized it was more important to have loved.

M.B.

Images FOR words

"I have made
my chief study
in the book of charity;
it teaches
everything."

SAINT DOMINIC

WORK AND PROPERTY

By ANTONIO MARIA BAGGIO

In the midst of the many social changes taking place in ancient times, the Fathers of the Church began the work of formulating a Christian social thought.

Roman society is remembered for its advanced and refined legal system but that legal system also allowed slaves to be sold like donkeys or to be sent off on an island to die if they fell ill. At the time of the Roman Empire labor was morally despised, ill paid and considered degrading.

Labor, as we saw in our previous installment, was held in much higher esteem in Israel than anywhere else. At first it was seen as a reflection of that same labor to which God had dedicated himself in the creation of the world and at the end of which he rested. Only after the first sin had this gift been converted into a duty and taken on the nature of punishment and expiation. The obligation to labor then became inseparably bound to human nature by a command of God.[1]

A religion founded by one who had earned his bread with the work of his hands would for this fact alone be repugnant to the mentality of almost all ancient peoples. Buddha, even though he preached austere renunciation, had passed the period preceding his mission in the luxurious ease of a royal palace as befitted the son of a king. The son of a carpenter as teacher, Messiah, God, was inconceivable; and many rebelled against the idea.[2]

During this period in the life of the early Church, Christianity was on the rise particularly in the cities and towns where the religious "contagion" could more easily spread. With the passage of time, the early Church Fathers began to reflect on the existing juridical and social structures and the inherent contrast with Jesus' message. This led to the gradual development of Christian social thought.

The problem of ownership

The name "Apostolic Fathers" is given to writers of the third generation after Jesus who were or were believed to have been disciples of the Apostles. Their works do not directly raise the issue of private property but in defining the Christian attitude towards the goods of this earth they stay within the limits of the teachings of Jesus and the Apostles. In their works they continually encourage reciprocal love, help of the needy; condem-

United Nations

ning greed and recommending detachment from wealth and possessions. They spoke rather about what the attitude should be of those who have possessions and for that reason are in a position to help others.

In the community described by Luke in the Acts of the Apostles which in many respects was similar to the community of the Apostolic Fathers, it is not obligatory to give up one's possessions. Many did sell their possessions but not everyone did so. We all can recall the episode of Ananias and his wife Sapphira who both fell dead shortly after falsely claiming to have given the entire proceeds of the sale of their property to the community's common fund. They were punished probably not

St. Augustine spoke out clearly about property: "The superabundance of the rich is the necessities of the poor.... All that God has given us above our needs, he has not given us for ourselves alone but that we may distribute it. If we keep it, we are keeping the goods of others."

because they held onto some of the money but rather because they lied.[2]

To those converts who asked what they should do, Peter did not say to sell their possessions, but rather to repent and confess their sins.[3] The Fathers explained that after this, all the energies of the convert should be directed toward consolidating his or her new life and above all in dedicating oneself to building up the heavenly city to which he or she now belonged.

At the beginning of the second century Hermas, a Christian ascetic from the business world explained this attitude in his work: *The Shepherd* advising Christians not to own more than they need. "Instead of acquiring fields, free the oppressed as much as you are able; assist widows and orphans and do not forget them. Let the fields be represented by them. Spend on them the wealth you have received from God. This is why the master wanted you to be rich so that you would lend it to him in this service."[4] According to Hermas, then, possessions exist in order to be given. According to John Chrysostom and Cyril of Jerusalem, possessions belong to people so that they can acquire merit by sharing them with others.[5]

Clement of Alexandria develops another important point. "Let no one therefore cast away his substance, but rather let him cast away the passion that keeps him from a better use of it. Become good and upright, and then you will be able to use these goods honestly also." Igino Giordani, in his book *The Social Message of the Early Fathers,* explains that it is not Clement of Alexandria's intention to defend the ownership of property at the expense of the poor or to arrest the distribution of goods accomplished in the community by voluntary contributions. On the contrary, he would like to regulate that process, now irregular and fitful, and make it a continuous and normal activity, an increasing flow of adequate and proportionate contributions of revenue on the part of those who possess and retain capital and property. "How much more useful would it be, on the other hand, if a man, possessing sufficient, should not feel any loss from his possessions, but should come to the aid of him who requires it! ... Indeed what could men share in common if no one owned anything?"[6]

St. Augustine makes his thoughts very clear: "The superabundance of the rich is ►

The Fathers of the Church teach us that all goods are gifts of God which reach us through our work. There would be no reason therefore to despise our work, even manual labor. It is everyone's duty and must be practiced like a virtue.

the necessities of the poor. To have a superabundance is to have another's goods. All that God has given us above our needs, he has not given us for ourselves alone but that we may distribute it. If we keep it, we are keeping the goods of others."[7]

Attachment to one's excess wealth is the moral cause of usury which many Fathers sharply condemned and in times of economic crisis and social upheaval, greed even led to expropriating the possessions of refugees for one's own gain. Gregory Thaumaturgus braved all the problems of ownership created by the invasion of the Goths and stated that it was not licit to enrich oneself with the goods of people who had been overwhelmed by the disaster and whatever booty had been taken by Christians in the wake of the invasion was to be restored to its owners. Gregory publicly expelled the guilty from the Church. "Let no one deceive themselves," the bishop explained to the community, "into thinking the things you found now belong to you: not even if it were true would it be permissible to take them for your own."[8]

Mine and yours

The Church Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries—differently from the Apostolic Fathers—were more explicit about private property and more negative. Lactantius wrote of an original commonality among all peoples who had received the earth from God altogether so that no one would be lacking in what was made available to all. According to Lactantius, things changed when mankind alienated itself from God provoking a division that broke down into castes (such was the case with the Greeks and Romans) which was incompatible with Christian justice. Instead Christian justice taught the equality of all persons since they all came into this world equal.[9]

After him, John Chrysostom held that the communion of goods is a better social rule than private property and only it conforms to nature.[10] Words such as "mine" and "yours," he continues, "have no meaning. If you call a house your own, you have said nothing."[11] "Besides," Ambrose adds, nature gave us a common right to all things: usurpation has made them become private."[12] According to Ambrose, we can be owners only of those goods which can be strictly considered indispensible, the others are goods stolen from the common patrimony.[13]

Once again we quote Clement of Alexandria for his clarity and vision: "The sums spent for vain pleasures deserve to be called waste and not expenditures: for God—I know it well—has given us the right of use, but only within the limits of necessity; and he has ordained that this use be in common. It is therefore wrong that one should be in luxury while the many are in distress...."[14] Igino Giordani adds: "It is clear that the author aimed at a reorganization of the economic order in which serious inequalities would be resolved by the transfer of a part of one's possessions, the part that exceeds the purely necessary. The Church inaugu-

es an economic system of its
n, founded on the communi-
ion of goods, or, as Clement
Alexandria terms it, miti-
ting the concept somewhat,
e sharing or donation of a
rt of one's goods. This is
lized in the least degree
en the sums usually destined
luxuries devolve to the use
the community, and to the
ghest degree when one's en-
e revenues and property are
nated to that use.[15]

Slavery

The problem of private pro-
rty has the same roots as
at of slavery: The early
thers, in fact, insist that all
rsons are equal by their very
ture; only human laws make
stinctions. Slavery does not
rrespond to the natural order
things that God intended
t rather depends on fallen
ture after original sin. If
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n, so too then can slavery be
ercome.

t might be expected then
m this complex of ideas that
e Fathers would draw and
velop a coherent program of
cial change. This is so only in
rt: in fact, if the cause of
very, (like other evils) is sin,
could say the Christian pro-
am presented by the Fathers
es to eliminate sin, (the
use) and only secondarily
nds to change the social
uation which is the effect.
Although change it must, because an unjust situation facilitates sin, generating a vicious circle.

The Church Fathers follow the example of Paul who sent back the Christian slave who had run away from his master (also a Christian) reminding them that in front of God they were equal and that the external formal bond of slavery imposed by circumstances should contain the royal bond of reciprocal love. In this manner, a position of the Church—which might appear paradoxical is clear: excommunication is declared on whoever leads a slave to run away from, or hate his master; but considers permissible, and even obligatory, the flight of a slave in order to avoid immoral advances by the master or in order not to betray the faith.[16]

The hidden revolution

Much more than it may seem, this kind of thinking produces a deep social change. First of all a moral development takes place. Let's take Augustine's case. He directs every father of a family in his diocese to behave as a bishop would. This implies that each father take responsibility for teaching right principles to his wife as well as to his slave who was ransomed back by Christ at the same price as the owner.[17]

John Chrysostom reminds us that the authority of the head of the house should be exercised with charity and he places the slaves on the same level as the children.[18]

It was inevitable that sooner or later the laws of the Church would find themselves in conflict with the laws of the State. Roman law, for example, did not punish a master who killed his slave while excessively punishing him, whereas the Church imposed lengthy penances.

The Church considered marriage among slaves as valid although the State did not recognize them as such; the Church fought the concubine system of slave owners which normally ended with the repudiation of the slave by the owner. For the Church the woman slave is a woman and not an object.

The social emancipation of the most vulnerable groups grew almost unnoticed within the confines of the family unit gradually eliminating the cruelty in slavery. The conditions of slaves improved and became more humane in the Christian homes and their emancipation became frequent not only upon the death and bequest of the owner but also upon their conversion.

Then finally the laws of the State acceded to Christian influence during the reign of Constantine. Constantine forbade, for example, that the families of slaves be divided either ►

through sale or inheritance. Above all, however, he conferred on the Church the power to emancipate slaves thereby legally recognizing what had taken place in fact. This meant that it sufficed that the owner declare in Church, in the presence of the bishop and people the slave's emancipation. This gave new dignity to the slave which was very different from the role formerly imposed by civil society. Igino Giordani states:"The Church deliberately uplifts the lower classes, the majority, whom she calls the elect, although made of people who all the year are cold and hungry in need of everything, burdened with pain and grief of every sort. The intense community life of the Christians, from their prayers to God to their fulfillment of the precepts of charity, was fashioning a new social conscience, as the natural outpouring of their religious life.

The Church knew well that the reeducation of her members inevitably spread the conflict from the religious-political field to the social one since the new conscience of the outcasts could not help reacting with a constant and determined influence on their environment."[19]

Work is sacred

In the Church of the early centuries a vocabulary full of agricultural terminology was used in speaking of the things of God. This was as Jesus had done, and the Jewish culture before him. John Chrysostom used farming terms to explain the plan of salvation and vice versa in a continual exchange of imagery that finished in rendering human activity sacred. For John Chrysostom, and for others as well, work is a truly spiritual task.[20]

On the other hand, however, the majority of society in which Christianity was expanding held a deep-seated repugnance for manual labor and in general for all activity related to providing for one's daily welfare. This was the mentality of the times. It wasn't at all strange then that Celsus, the pagan apologist and aristocrat, could not accept as a teacher, a Palestinian Jesus who came from the working class. His attacks were so virulent that Origen answered for the Christians: "Our Jesus who is depised because he was born in a little village that was not even Hellenic or of any other celebrated nationality, and who is defamed because he was the son of a poor and hardworking mother and because, driven by hunger, he left his country and went to earn his living in Egypt; this Jesus, who was not just an ordinary (...) born on some tiny and most contemptible island, but altogether the very lowliest of the type..., succeeded in shaking the whole inhabited world, not only more than Themistocles of Athens but also more than Plato, Pythagoras or any other philosopher, king or general of this world."[21] Indeed, what disturbed the pagan Caecilius, for example, was the fact that "persons with no education, uninitiated in the field of literature, ignorant of even the meaner arts" were engaging in debate concerning the supreme Power of the universe and its attributes. "This deplorable, illicit and hopeless faction is composed of the crudest elements and of credulous women of the people."[22] However, Giordani maintains that the charge the pagans made that the Christians gathered in the dregs of society was perhaps due more to the assistance, education and unaccustomed dignity the Church bestowed on the poor, the women and children than to its actual composition."[23]

In summary, we have seen that material wealth—from the earliest times in the Church—is stripped of the value ordinarily given to it and is reduced to a status of relativity which is filled with responsibility. □

1) Igino Giordani, "The Social Message of Jesus" (St. Paul Editions, 1977) p. 309; 2) ibid. p. 311; 3) Acts 2:37-38; 4) Hermas "The Shepherd," as quoted in "Theology of the Fathers" Citta Nuova Press; 5) John Chrysostom, "Homily on Statues," ibid.6) Igino Giordani, "The Social Message of the Early Church Fathers" (St. Paul Editions, 1977) p. 271-272; 7) Augustine, "Comment on the Psalms" CXLII, 12, "Theology of the Fathers"; 8) Gregory Thaumaturgus, "Canonical Letter" 2:4-8, ibid.; 9) Lactantius, "Divine Instruction" v. 5:15, ibid.; 10) John Chrysostom, "Homily on the First Letter to Timothy", 12 ibid.; 11) John Chrysostom, "Homily on the First Letter to the Corinthians, 10 ibid.; 12) Ambrose, "Duties" 1:28, p. 132, ibid.; 13) Ambrose, "Nabut Israelita 4, ibid.; 14) Clement of Alexandria, "Paedagogus" as quoted in "The Social Message of the Early Church Fathers," p. 319; 15) I. Giordani, "The Social Message of the Early Church Fathers," p. 320; 16) "Concilium Gangrense," canon 3, op. cit.; 17) Augustine, "Discourses," p. 94 as quoted by Giordani, p. 320; 18) John Chrysostom, "Homilies on Genesis," 6:2 ibid.; 19) I. Giordani, ibid. p. 295; 20) John Chrysostom, Homily on the Second Letter to the Corinthians 15:4 op. cit.; 21) Origen, "Against Celsus I" as quoted in "The Social Message of the Early Fathers" p. 292-3; 22) I. Giordani, ibid. p.293; 23) ibid. p. 294.

Making the connection

Education

One morning I went into school and simply did not realize how on edge I was. News had reached us the day before of Mexico's terrible earthquake and so all night we were trying to get through to our relatives. Communication in and out of Mexico was at a standstill. The following morning when the bell rang in school, I had not made the transition from my personal worry to work.

Many of the students were also very concerned as they too had relatives whom they had been unable to contact. The class was quiet as I took roll. We reviewed what little news we had gleaned so far; everyone's attention was absorbed by the tragedy. A good halfway into the class, Susie appeared.

As usual she was late and so, as usual, I asked her why she was late. Late arrivals annoy me but, that day, I let my voice express precisely how I felt about *habitual* late arrivals. She responded in like manner saying to the effect that it was none of my business and that it would be wise not to trouble her further. I put down the chalk and asked if she might like to rephrase her message. At this point a silence descended around our two voices.

Susie, of course, only dug her heels in further and continued with a series of sentences for which she could have been removed from school. The class didn't breathe. In the silence someone let out a long, low whistle to announce Susie's imminent demise.

I, for my part, was gripping the edge of the podium. Only then did I realize just how angry I was. I instantly reasoned, "She is the student. She should get in line. Nobody says...." But I knew. I *knew* that I should be the first to love, only I just wasn't doing it. I was simply furious, or better, livid. I told myself, "Alice, you'd better get a grip on yourself. You're going to need some real patience here. You're overreacting. " None of it did any good. I remained absolutely livid.

I tried another round of patience with Susie. She too would have none of it. In fact, she entrenched herself even further, this time with expletives. I teetered on the edge of my anger. I knew she already could be removed for what had tran spired, but something deeper than my anger prevented me from breaking the connection.

The bell rang. Nobody moved. Everyone wanted to see how it would end. I wrote a pass for Susie, forcing her to follow me to the next class. I assigned the next class a temporary assignment; we stepped outside for Round Three.

I even brought two chairs outside for what I felt would be the duration. We spoke further until our voices projected into a neighboring classroom. The teacher stepped out to ask if I would like a witness (for legal purposes) to what was being said. I thanked her but said we could handle it. Meanwhile, Susie was a blazing spitfire. She was ready for anything but backing down.

I was not much different. It was at this extreme that I finally told myself, "Look, Alice, either you live this Ideal to love your neighbor, or you quit altogether. *You*, not she has to die inside." Suddenly I remembered our relatives in Mexico. I thought: "People are *dying*." I realized with icy clarity that life is *short*, that I *had* to love. Immediately. Susie. For the first time I looked over at her with love. I told her, "Susie this is ridiculous. We have to start over." That was like trying to douse an electrical fire with water. She was still seeing red. Gradually it was dawning on me just *how* wrong I was, and that I had better not only stop, but apologize as well. However, on the heels of this realization scurried the thought: "If you *do* apologize, she'll rip you to pieces. She can take you apart in the classroom if you show you are weaker." It was smooth, insidious, and I almost bought it. It was there that I said, "No, even if she totally misunderstands, even if she uses it against me, if I am Christian, I have to apologize.

I've been way out of line." To do so, though, took all of my will. It was as though something broke inside of me as I began my apology. When she stopped talking, her eyes were still spitting fire as I told her that I was sorry, that I had been way out of line. It was taking some time for my words to sink in so I just repeated everything: that I had been out of line, that I felt bad to have deepened this division between us. I told her that what mattered in life—the bottom line—was to love and that certainly she had experienced anything *but* that from me. I told her I was sorry. She was so stunned by the turn-about that she just stared at me. Then in a split second I saw her eyes clear from fury to calm, as after an electrical storm. Nothing was left of her anger.

Without words she did a 180 degree change. We sat a second in what must be the quiet after the storm. I felt free then to say to her, "You know, Susie, I have to say you too have been way out of line. But what we could do is make a deal, a pact, to start over again. Not to say that all this didn't happen, but we could start fresh—even build on what's happened. We could make a pact to see each other new." I held my breath to see what she would say. I had played all my cards so I just sat there praying that she would feel the love, no matter what she decided to do.

Abruptly, she agreed. We immediately stood up, both acutely conscious of something big having happened. I signed her admittance slip, and we returned to our respective classes.

The next day she was in the room before the bell rang. The class was mystified. I simply nodded at her and her frank look confirmed her silent agreement to the pact. The following two days she was removed from school for having caused a teacher trouble. On Friday, she returned. By that time in class we had organized to meet after school. Privately I was wondering who would appear because, from personal experience, I understood that good will and actualization of good will, could be two distinct realities.

3:05 arrived. As students streamed out of the building, Susie was the first to arrive, her eyes filled with lightning charged this time with joy.

A.M.

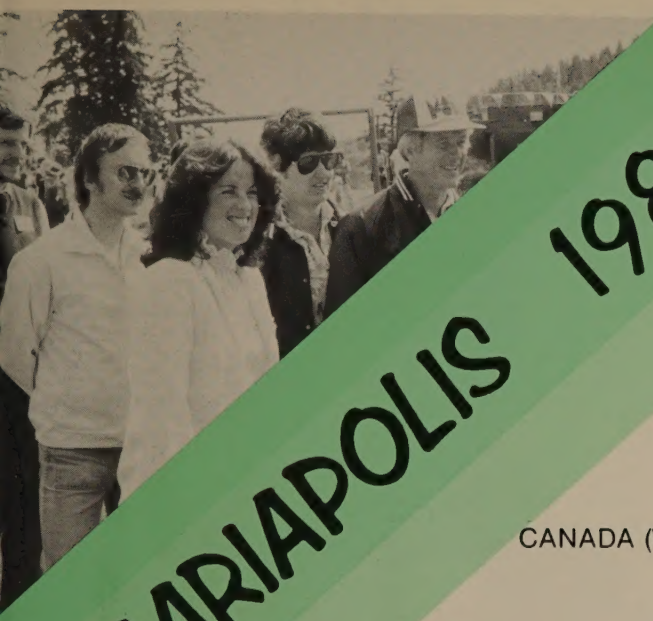
(Continued from page 9)

would be easier to just let them do what they want and not be patient enough to take a stand. I've seen it confirmed over and over again, however, that what matters is to love, and then everything else works out.

"The other morning this son came out ready for school but he had put on a really terrible shirt. He assured me he was ready for school and I told him he would have to change. Immediately he got upset and gave all the reasons he had for wearing that shirt... they were having gym that day and he shouldn't wear anything nice and so on. For me it would have been easy to just react, make him change his shirt and that's all. As his mother I could have taken that stand, but I knew that I could also do it with love. So I went to his room to help him choose something different. He continued to resist and said that as soon as he got to school he was going to take it off. 'That's up to you,' I replied and continued to look for the right shirt. He was still upset when he left but I went about my work with peace because I felt I had acted out of love, trying to guide him in the right way.

"That afternoon when he came home he began talking all about his day and he didn't mention the shirt at all. We had a little snack together and he told me about his new teacher and the subject he really liked. It cost me not to ask about the shirt because just for my own satisfaction I wanted to know what happened. Instead I just listened to all his news without asking anything.

"He went off to his room and came out after ten minutes. 'Mom, I forgot to tell you that I left my shirt on all day. I was going to take it off before gym but I wanted to love you, too, so I left it on. You know three of my friends told me what a nice shirt it was!' "



MARIAPOLIS 1986

SOUTHWEST:

Las Cruces State University
Las Cruces, New Mexico
June 29, after supper -
July 5, after breakfast

MIDWEST/EAST COAST: Alfred University
Alfred, New York
July 20, including supper -
July 25, after breakfast

CANADA (West): Northwestern University
Nelson, B.C.
July 13, after supper -
July 19, after breakfast

CANADA (East): Carlton University
French/English Ottawa, Ont.
July 27, after supper -
August 2, after breakfast

The Mariapolis are the summer meetings of the Focolare, held every year, for those who wish to come into contact with it.

For one week the Mariapolis offers to hundreds of people of all ages and walks of life a very full program that includes general sessions with talks on the spirituality of unity, sharing of experiences in living this spirituality, documentaries, meetings in small sharing groups and recreational programs. The Mariapolis is a time for prayer and recollection. The celebration of the Eucharist is at the center of each day and all participants gather together at the conclusion of the activities for evening prayer.

Children have separate activities which involve them in the life of the Mariapolis through various spiritual and recreational programs. Special programs are available for teenagers as well.

The week, however, is more than the sum of its parts. It is an experience of how life, also every day life, can be transformed if love and unity are at its foundation. When the Mariapolis ends, people find that it was not only a tremendously enjoyable week, but they have experienced a way of living that they will be able to bring back home.

VACATION MARIAPOLIS

Mariapolis Luminosa
Hyde Park, New York

July 27 including supper -
August 10, after lunch

Space is very limited.
If you are interested in attending
please contact the Focolare Center
nearest you.
(See inside back cover for addresses)

Igino Giordani exchanging greetings with the author of the article.

(Continued from page 13)

whoever may be near me as that person and every person was created as a gift for me. If then we are a total gift of ourselves to each other, we are 'one' even though we are obviously separate and distinct persons. So it is with the Trinity: isn't the Father in the Trinity everything for the Son? And isn't the Son everything for the Father? Because they are love, they are one: but they are, at the same time, completely distinct—which is to say, they are totally themselves, and their way of loving reflects their own Personhood. It is a mystery which is very easy to live but beyond our logic to fathom."

Still mystified I shook my head somewhat ruefully and said: "Do you really think that this is an experience that everyone can live?"

"I really think so! Don't you think that Jesus spoke to everyone and for everyone? Didn't he say for everyone that where two or three are united in his name—meaning when they decide to love one another 'as' he loved us—they are then no longer 'just themselves,' they are Jesus ... he in them and they in him. But Jesus is in the Father and therefore also 'they in him' are in the Father and participate in the life of the Trinity and mirror the Trinity on earth! Isn't this putting into practice the prayer of Jesus: 'Your will be done, on earth as in heaven'? "Isn't this the life of heaven which Jesus has made possible for us to live here on earth?

"And if you knew how many people are already doing this throughout the world and how many 'fires' of this kind of love have already been lit all over the world!"

The sun was like a burning ball sinking slowly behind the trees. Somewhere in the distance I could hear the city traffic as thousands of commuters made their homeward trek. Giordani leaned his head against the back of the bench and closed his eyes, letting the last golden rays of the day shine on his upturned face. I tiptoed away thinking that humanity can still continue to hope. □

What is the Focolare Movement?

THE BEGINNINGS

FOCOLARE means "hearth," "family fireside." What first strikes people when they come in contact with members of the Focolare, whether in small groups or in large gatherings, is the atmosphere of a family. It is a family formed by many different people in various walks of life. The Focolare Movement is also known as the "Work of Mary." Under this name it was approved by Pope John XXIII in 1962.

The Focolare Movement began in 1943 in Italy. In the midst of the terrible destruction of World War II, Chiara Lubich realized that God is the only one worth living for. As a result, she began to center her life on the Gospel, together with a small group of young women who followed her. Their ideal became one of striving toward the fulfillment of Jesus' last prayer to the Father: "May they all be one" (Jn.17:21).

The life of Chiara and her first companions, and the spiritual way they spontaneously followed, gave rise to the unique form of spirituality of the Focolare Movement, a spirituality of unity. It has proved to be a powerful means of introducing the Gospel into modern life, of going to God together.

WHO ARE THE FOCOLARINI

Single men and women live in separate communities called Focolare Centers. Their principal aim is to achieve unity among themselves through mutual charity practiced twenty-four hours a day. They follow the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience. They work as other laymen and women in regular jobs and professions.

Some married persons, even though continuing to live in their families, participate fully in the life of either the men's or women's Focolare Centers in their common effort to achieve this same unity. They are called "Married Focolarini" and form the backbone of a vast Movement within the Movement, called the New Family Movement.

THE VOLUNTEERS AND THE NEW HUMANITY MOVEMENT

The Volunteers, also called the "Volunteers of God," are a large group within the Focolare Movement; they would like to transform all human realities according to the Gospel spirit. The Volunteers are the backbone of the mass movement called New Humanity. The aim of this Movement is to help form a society made of men and women who are made "new" by the Gospel message and who can then bring new life to all fields of human activity (education, business, etc.). This results in new social relationships which, in turn, lead to the realization of new structures of society.

GEN

The new generations of the Focolare Movement form another Movement or, better, three movements: the Gen 2, the Gen 3 and the Gen 4 Movements, divided according to their various age groups. "Gen" stands for new generation. The Gen have committed themselves to living the Gospel message of love and to sharing with other youth the conviction they have that the Gospel is the answer to every question and the motive for everything they do.

THE MOVEMENT AMONG THE RELIGIOUS

Men and women religious — although they live according to their own rules and constitutions and are already a distinct part of the Church through their religious families — can also be associated with the Focolare.

Contact with the Movement helps them to focus their attention on the specific charism of their founders, and to see how it can be lived in the present time.

PRIESTS — PRIESTS' MOVEMENT —SEMINARIANS — PARISH MOVEMENT

Many diocesan priests are committed to living the spirituality of the Focolare Movement. Some of them live in community. They form the backbone of the Priests' Movement which is made up of priests who live the spirituality of unity.

FOCOLARE FAMILY

The largest group within the Focolare Movement is made up of men, women and young people who are connected with the Movement without having any formal ties with it. Their bond of unity stems from their acceptance of its spirit and their desire to live it.

ECUMENISM

The Movement not only crossed the political boundaries of more than 100 countries, it has also gone beyond the barriers erected for centuries between the various Christian Churches.

Ecumenical activities take place in the different parts of the world where the Movement exists.

In the past few years a promising, ongoing dialogue has been established with faithful of other religions.

SUMMER MARIAPOLIS

Summer meetings are held every year for those interested in the Movement and for those who wish to come into contact with it. For one week persons of all ages and walks of life are exposed to the spirituality of unity. Above all, they strive to practice it by creating among themselves a rapport that molds them into a community. It is intended to be a basic experience of such intense unity that the people will be able to bring it back into their own environments. And this is the most striking fruit of these conventions. They tend to be models of a world which lives according the Gospel.

PERMANENT MARIAPOLIS

The need to prolong the experience of the summer meetings brought about the birth of small cities called Permanent Mariapolis. They are made up of young men and women, as well as whole families, who are there for a designated period of time to be formed according to the Gospel spirit of unity.

They also attend classes in Sacred Scripture, Theology and Sociology and work for their own support.

MARIAPOLIS CENTERS

In addition to the Permanent Mariapolis, there are Mariapolis Centers, which are training centers for the members of the Movement.

FOCOLARE ADDRESSES IN NORTH AMERICA

CHICAGO:
P.O. Box 53426
Chicago, IL 60653

NEW YORK:
P.O. Box 496
New York, NY 10021

LOS ANGELES
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